

lence and inactivity. And Seneca in particular gives us to understand how much it is to be prized for the same reason, in one of his emphatical sentences: *No avarice says he, is honourable, but that of time. Nulla est honesta, avaritia, nisi temporis.* The Roman Emperor Titus, when he happened to let slip any day, without having done any action, particularly good, was wont to exclaim with regret: *Diem perdidit; I have lost a day.* How such instances even among the pagans ought to confound the slothful Christian, to whom time should seem, as it really is, infinitely more precious, for the reasons already alledged.

But to bring the subject more home to us by a supposed example. Imagine, if you please, a man entrusted by a friend with a very large sum of money; the use and interest of which for a time not specified, is entirely at his own disposal; what would you think of such a person if, instead of laying it out to interest; and thus, while he may, providing abundantly for the future exigencies of life; he busied himself only in scattering it up and down along the highways, and in throwing it away on every body whom he chanced to meet? Or were it to be wondered at, if at some unexpected moment the owner make his appearance, and finding not only his money without interest, but wholly wasted and squandered away, should order him to be severely punished for having so unwarrantably disposed of what did not properly belong to him?

But the case of this imaginary madman is exactly our own. Almighty God has entrusted us with our time, as with a sum of immense value. By laying it out to interest, that is, by employing it in the practice of good works, we may not only make abundant provision for a never-ending eternity; but as we have above shewn, we may be every moment purchasing for ourselves new honours and dignities in the kingdom of heaven; and yet although we know not how soon this treasure may be taken from us, we not only neglect to lay it out to interest; but like the madman just now described, we seem quite impatient to get rid of it at any rate. The very keeping of this inestimable treasure seems to us a most disagreeable charge; and without reflecting on the fatal consequences of such a conduct, we throw it away in heaps, and, as it were, in the lump, upon every trifling pretence or occasion; and in proportion as our stock is diminished, we seem to think the weight of our burthen decreased.

Christians! let us now at last be wise. Let us henceforth begin to make up for our past losses by our future care and diligence. To be sure, that part of our time, which is gone, can never be recalled; but still that part of it, which is yet to come, is wholly at our own disposal. And if we know not how much of it as yet remains, let this be but an additional motive for us to prize it the more, and to husband well all the moments, which God is still pleased to allow us. Often have we deserved, on account of our sins to have forfeited all our time: and yet our God has hitherto prolonged it; so that our present life is nothing less

than a miracle of his goodness and mercy. For every mortal sin we have had the misfortune to commit, we deserved to die, and to have been plunged for ever into the flames of hell. The dreadful sentence of condemnation was then passed upon us, when the crime was perpetrated; and yet, our Lord has suspended the execution of it, in order still to allow us time to repent. This time of reprieve, which his mercy has granted us, shall we employ it only to augment our guilt, and thus provoke him to put an end to it? O, this were madness indeed; for if once the time of our reprieve is ended, there is no more room left for mercy. If once the short day of our life, during which we may labour, is brought to a close, it shall never more return; but a dreadful and eternal night immediately succeeds, in which, as our Saviour says *no man can work.* John ix. 4. And hence the forth great and last motive for valuing our time: because, when lost, it is irreparable; when past and gone it can never be recalled.

4°. Indeed, if our life, when finished, could be renewed, or time, when lost, restored, our folly in wasting it to no purpose, and in squandering it away so profusely, might then be less. But you know, dear Christians! that those who have once passed the gates of death, have passed them never to return: and that the fate of such is decided for eternity, either to reign for ever happy with God in heaven, or to suffer with the devils and the damned in the fiery dungeons of hell. Now which ever of these two alternatives may fall to our lot, after death, and either of them must be our portion for ever; we shall have but too much reason to regret our precious time, when lost, because it can never be recalled.

The Saints who are once admitted to the beatific vision, who see God face to face, and mingle with the glorious princes of his household, are indeed, incapable of regretting with any degree of sorrow the loss of any portion of their time; because they are now completely happy, having attained their last end, which is God. He is their center, to which they were ever tending; and having at last arrived within their sphere, each at his own distance, they continue for ever to move around him, and shine resplendent with the splendour of his Majesty. But yet, to whatever degree of glory they are raised, if we except the blessed Virgin Mother of our Lord, and perhaps some other privileged individuals besides, their glory might still have been greater, had their lives in this world been full; that is, had they improved all the moments of their time; or had they employed them in the practice of the more heroic virtues. For in my Father's house, says our Lord, there are many mansions, many different degrees of glory: And again, *I will render, says he, to every one according to his works.* And can those blessed souls be sensible of this, and not feel in some degree for the irreparable loss, irreparable even to them of every the smallest portion of that precious time which once was their's. There is indeed nothing they could desire on earth but the opportunity of time, by the right employment of which they might augment their glory, and

render themselves worthy of drawing nearer to that God, whom they so ardently love. And if, as I said, they feel no such regret for it, as could in the smallest degree impair their bliss, it is on account of the fulness of that bliss, which they now enjoy; and which, though it might indeed have been greater, is yet too great to leave any room for regret. It is because they are now drowned in an ocean of delight, of which, though without satiety, they are full. It is, in fine, on account of the extreme joy they must feel at the thought of the dangers they have escaped: and because, having now no other will, but that of the Deity, they desire nothing, but what he desires; they love nothing, but what he loves; nor wish or want any thing more than what they now so fully possess. Yet are they not insensible of the loss they have sustained, in having let slip unimproved the smallest portion of the time of their mortal life, especially when they now so clearly perceive to what a still greater height of glory it might have exalted them in the kingdom of their heavenly father.

But if we can suppose the blessed in heaven sensible in any degree of the loss of only a portion of their time; how keen and thrilling must be the regret which the damned shall feel for the loss of all their time; and with what bitter, but fruitless lamentations shall they lament their misfortune, which, alas! admits of no redress! O to them how precious would the smallest portion of that time seem which to us appears of so little value; nay, which we often wish past, and thus struck off from our life, as irksome, tedious, and insupportable! Fools that we are, we little know the value of that time which we at present enjoy. But woe to those who only learn to appreciate time when time shall be no more! What would not a damned soul give for one of those hours, which we throw away on idle conversation, on frivolous amusements, or waste in doing nothing to the purpose? Or is there any thing within the whole compass of nature, which she would prefer to a few moments of time, during which she might repent; if by repentance she could but atone for her past guilt; if with floods of tears she could but wash away the horrid stain of mortal sin that defiles her, and extinguish the wrath of an angry God? And suppose a few hours of time allowed her for this purpose; how would she spend them? Good God, Christians, what a penitent should we then see! The sight alone would strike us dead with horror; nor could we endure even to behold the severities she would exercise upon herself in order to appease her offended God. And, indeed, all the severities she could inflict upon herself were as nothing, or but like an amusement compared with those she must otherwise endure from the chastising hand of the offended Deity. But, alas! no such time shall ever be allowed her; for if any time, however short, were allowed her to repent, hell would be no longer hell; nor eternity eternity. For ever, then, must she dwell in those gloomy regions of never ending despair. For ever, must she mingle her outcries and lamentations, with the shrieks and groans, the howlings and yells